

# “SHAKESPEARE’S” TUTOR: Sir Thomas Smith (1513-1577)

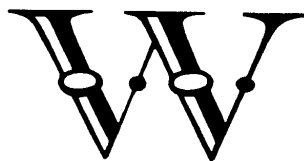
Stephanie Hopkins Hughes

---



Prospero: Knowing I loved my books, he furnished me,  
From my own library, with volumes that  
I prize above my dukedom.

*The Tempest: 1.2*



WHAT did Shakespeare know? As so many scholars have shown—whether or not they have accepted their own abundant proofs—the evidence reveals a writer fluent in Latin and classical Greek (Greenwood 93, 98), in contemporary French (*Henry V:III.3*, Shaheen 361) and Italian (Grillo 125-6); one who had read and remembered a great deal of history, both the history of his own nation (Bullough 3.xi, Shaheen 360) and that of ancient times (Cantor 10); and although he didn’t always reflect what he knew in his plays exactly the way it happened, much must be allowed for the purposes of drama. He was familiar with the Bible, particularly the Geneva Bible (Shaheen 39) and the *Book of Common Prayer* (51). He was familiar with the works of ancient philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero (Baldwin 412). He was familiar with the ancient Greek dramatists as with the Romans Plautus, Juvenal, Cicero and Virgil (Churton Collins as qtd. in Greenwood 93, 98-9); with Terence and Seneca, (Muir 18, 255-7); with his Continental contemporaries, Ronsard (Lewis 170), Ariosto (Grillo 129), and Tasso (131). He was highly trained in techniques of rhetoric (Joseph 44-5). He was so highly trained in the law that, as a matter of course, he communicated easily in metaphors couched in abstruse legal terminology (Greenwood 375-6). He knew a great deal about astronomy; also astrology, which he referred to often, always in ways that showed surprising expertise, even when he was making fun of it, or more often, of someone’s ignorance of it.

In terms of life experience, his knowledge of horticulture reflects the experience of one who has done (or observed) a great deal of gardening (Spurgeon 45-6). He knew a lot about the process of distilling (medicines, perfumes and liqueurs); images based on distilling come almost as frequently to his mind as gardening terms. His knowledge of music is reflected in his many metaphors based on musical ideas, references to harmony and images of playing instruments; his light-hearted plays usually contain several songs and many of the poems attributed to him are obviously song lyrics.<sup>1</sup> His frequent use of terms and imagery from hawking show more than a little personal experience with that specialized sport.

But this is simply the material he had to work with. Beyond the material is the use to which he put it. His often wildly creative use of his knowledge of languages strongly suggests that it came to him at an early age, as music came to Mozart, drawing came to Picasso or the use of the mallet and chisel on marble came to Michelangelo, and, therefore, as with them, it was brought to him before he was old enough to seek it out for himself (Winner 288-290). This knowledge fed a fascination with words, from the science of linguistics on the one hand to the magic of poetry on the other; words, with their sound and beyond their sound, their music. When he needed a word that didn't exist in English, he'd take one from Latin or Greek and make an English word of it, often by replacing the foreign ending with an English ending, always with a musician's ear, a poet's ear, the sound as much in mind as the meaning.

And what do we see when we examine the education of Edward de Vere? The education we have traced for Shakespeare offers every one of these quite specific requirements. For Edward de Vere spent his formative years with two of the most intensely eager and capable educators in the nation, Sir Thomas Smith and William Cecil, Lord Burghley. Burghley's reputation as a promoter and patron of education and educators is relatively well known. Less known today is Sir Thomas Smith, de Vere's first tutor, with whom (it seems) he spent the major portion of his childhood.

### **Sir Thomas Smith (1513–1577)**

Smith would have needed no introduction in his own time. Lavishly praised by his contemporaries, and for several generations after, as a scholar, teacher, orator and philosopher, one of the shining lights of Cambridge University, Smith was an important figure in the national government as well. Principal Secretary to Edward VI for a year in the late 1540s and to Queen Elizabeth for four years in the mid-70s, he also put in several long tours of duty as Ambassador to France.

John Strype, his first biographer (1698), reflects throughout his book the high regard in which Smith was held in the seventeenth century:

---

*Stephanie Hopkins Hughes has been studying the Shakespeare authorship question for fourteen years, with her primary focus on Oxford's biography and a reconstruction of the facts surrounding the creation of the commercial theater in London in the 1590s. She has written and lectured on Robert Greene, Emilia Bassano Lanier and the Sonnets at various Oxfordian conferences, taught classes at Concordia University in British Literature, and recently spent three months in London studying and researching. She is the editor of THE OXFORDIAN and a member of the Steering Committee for the annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon.*

He bore a great part, both in the university, the church and in the Commonwealth . . . the best scholar in his time, a most admirable orator, linguist and moralist . . . an ingenious poet, an excellent speaker, of exquisite skill in the Civil Law, in Astronomy, in natural philosophy and Physic, [and] in Divinity . . . . He and John Cheke instituted a new pronunciation of Greek . . . he was made a fellow at nineteen . . . and called to read the Greek lectures at twenty-one. (Roper 157)

While at Cambridge, Smith endeavored to polish the English tongue—and was noted to be one of the three there that were the past masters of the English tongue. He invented a new alphabet of twenty-nine letters and sought a better spelling. (27) His profession was the Civil Law, and he was the first Regius Professor of it in the University placed therein by the Royal Founder, Henry VIII, whose scholar he was. . . He was a great Platonist, which noble and useful philosophy he and Cheke brought into study in the University, accustomed before to the crabbed, barbarous, useless, schoolmen. (211) He was an “excellent Linguist and a Master in the knowledge of the Latin, Greek, French and Italian tongues. (218)

Strype dwells on his knowledge of Roman History. He states that he was “very curious and exact” in the art of gardening” (218) and was renowned for his knowledge of medicine (“physick”) and chemistry (“the handmaid of physick”) for which he had “apartments in his house for his stills and laboratories” (214).

Though well aware of Smith’s reputation, it seems that Strype was unacquainted with his early history. According to Dewar, Stype’s account of his origins: wealth, importance, a father who was Sheriff of Essex and Hertford, was no more than “a patchwork” made up from records bearing on a number of other Smiths. The truth is far more interesting: his family were but minor gentry, his father a poor sheep farmer and Thomas himself a “beggary scholar” at Cambridge who owed all his success to his own “startling abilities” (3).

### **The University (1526-1546)**

Smith’s rapid rise, though certainly due to his native intellectual brilliance, was partly due to luck as well, for he entered Cambridge at an exceptional moment in the history of English higher education. At both universities, the liberal spirit of Humanism was just bursting into full flower—“that fairest spring of learning,” as Roger Ascham would refer to it later. Dubbed the “New Learning,” the Renaissance had finally reached English shores in the generation just preceding Smith, and it would be his lucky task to be foremost among those that culled the fruits produced by that first flowering.

His exceptional abilities rapidly earned him one prestigious appointment after another:

King's Scholar at age fourteen, Fellow of Queen's College at seventeen, Lecturer in Greek at twenty, Public Orator of the University at twenty-five, Henry VIII's first Regius Professor of Civil Law at twenty-seven and finally, Vice-Chancellor of the University at thirty. According to Strype, Smith's oratorical skills were such that the entire university would turn out to hear them. Walter Haddon said later that Smith infused life into every branch of study in the University and, like St. Paul, had been "all things to all men" (qtd. in Clarke 28).

At Cambridge he attracted a circle of friends and colleagues of the highest calibre; men that would soon be raising to previously unknown heights the standards of accomplishment in English statecraft, Church organization, jurisprudence, literature and pedagogy; among them John Cheke, Walter Haddon, Anthony Cooke, Roger Ascham, and youngest but eventually most famous, William Cecil. Of all of these, Smith was, at the time, considered the cream of the crop. Of his qualities as a teacher and writer, Dewar states:

There is evidence that he was an outstanding teacher. Apart from his brilliant formal "oratory" he held strong views on the techniques of adequate teaching and thorough study. His recommendations to young students intending to apply themselves to the law in his inaugural lecture are formidable . . . he was a stickler for accurate words and phraseology. . . . [His] literary style was much applauded. In 1595 Richard Carew wrote a "Treatise on the Excellency of the English Tongue" in which he compared leading literary writers with their classical counterparts. He did not hesitate to equate Smith with Plato for his mastery of style and grace of language. (14-16)

Smith spent only a year and a half studying in Padua, then the center for the study of Roman law, yet he was able to instill respect for his grasp of legal matters through the sheer brilliance of his lectures, the most popular at Cambridge during his time (Dewar 22).

### **Affairs of State**

Smith and Cecil were called to Court in 1547, where they joined Sir John Cheke, Roger Ascham and Sir Anthony Cooke, members of their Cambridge circle already at Court, brought there by Katherine Parr in 1542 to tutor the royal children. Within a month of his arrival, Smith's expertise in law raised him to the office of Clerk of the Privy Council. In March, he was made Master of Requests to the King's uncle, the real ruler, the Duke of Somerset. In April 1548, he was named Second Secretary to the King. His family benefited as well from their fortunate member's meteoric rise. Back in his hometown, in August 1549, his father, John Smith, and family friend, William Strachey, bought lands in and around Saffron Walden and set themselves up as gentlemen (35).<sup>2</sup>

Smith's great talents, however, so useful at Cambridge and when working out problems

in a purely intellectual sphere, were more of a hindrance than a help when it came to navigating the political winds at Court. Dewar characterizes his behavior as increasingly “conceited, arrogant and overbearing” during his time in office under Somerset, an opinion based on his own written remarks and those of his confrères.

Smith’s passions were of the mind. Unfortunately, his position in Edward’s government required that he deal with the religious passions of others at a time when they were at the flood, as the officials of England’s first Protestant administration struggled to maintain an equilibrium between the expectations of the reformers and the resistance of those who saw no reason to depart from the faith of their fathers in anything but allegiance to the Pope. Dewar states:

He maintained throughout his life a dislike for and complete lack of sympathy with the extremists of either side even when waves of public panic swept the country. . . . Intellectually impatient of and bored with theological passion, feeling none of its impulse and disliking its results, he succeeded throughout this delicately balanced year [1549] in turning nearly every section of religious opinion against him. (38)

### **Cecil moves ahead of Smith**

Throughout this period, Cecil continued to remain a step behind his older colleague. Seven years his junior and lacking the brilliant reputation Smith brought with him from Cambridge, Cecil took over Smith’s offices when he left them for something higher. But when Somerset fell from power in 1549, Smith, whose arrogance left him with no supporters, fell with him, while Cecil, with the political savvy that his great teacher lacked, lost no ground, but slid into the same position with the new Lord Protector, Warwick, that Smith had held with Somerset. From then on it would be Smith who would have to apply to Cecil for assistance in acquiring office. A stiff-necked man, one “high in th’instep” as he is referred to in a letter, the period in which Smith and his former pupil were reversing roles must have gone hard with him. Nor did Cecil, whether because he couldn’t or because he didn’t care to, give Smith much help in getting back into office for a good long while. Perhaps he wanted it to be clear to Smith who was to be in charge from then on. In any case, Cecil himself could do little but tread water during Queen Mary’s Catholic reign.

While working as secretary to Somerset, Smith was rewarded with two important sinecures, the Deanery of Carlisle and the Provostship of Eton. Eton kept him busy during the final years of Edward’s reign. He modernized procedures, maintained a strict oversight of finances and, again (as always), delighted in creating gardens; but he was forced to give this up as well when Mary took the throne. Despite his humiliating fall with Somerset and his

native restlessness, Smith no doubt enjoyed this respite from the cares of office. For one thing, he married again (his first wife had died the same day that Mary took office) a young woman in her early thirties—Philippa (né Wilford, widow of Sir John Hampden of Essex), who brought him a substantial property. This he promptly began to renovate, a project that, when he had the time, would absorb him for the rest of his life.

### De Vere goes to Smith

According to Dewar, it was during this period that the four-year-old de Vere was placed in his care. After describing events of May and then July of 1554, she speaks of John Taylor, Bishop of Lincoln, whose religious intransigence angered Mary so that he was evicted from his bishopric in March of 1554. "Smith offered [the Bishop] a home at Ankerwicke [one of Smith's properties] where he died in December. At the same time, Edward de Vere, only son of the Earl of Oxford, Mary's Great Chamberlain, was placed in Smith's household."<sup>3</sup> (77)

Although, to us, four may seem young to be sent to live outside the family, much less embark upon studies with a tutor, Cambridge University historian K.B. McFarlane informs us that the nobility of the late feudal period routinely placed young children outside the home with tutors, family members, trusted retainers and in convents; sometimes children as young as five (244). Since Smith's estates were not far from Hedingham there would have been opportunity for visits back and forth when the Earl and his Countess were in the country.

Keeping in mind that the record as we have it is still extremely sparse, the only break we see in this eight years de Vere spent with Smith was the brief period he spent at Cambridge in his ninth year, from October, 1558, until March, 1559 (Nelson, conference). Since he was enrolled at Smith's own college, Queens', it's probable that Smith was involved in the decision to place him there.

It seems likely that de Vere was transferred to Cambridge in anticipation of the death of Queen Mary, at which time Smith no doubt was certain he would be quickly recalled to national service.<sup>4</sup> And indeed, he was soon appointed to several commissions by the new Queen, probably with the encouragement of her new Principal Secretary, Sir William Cecil. During the winter that de Vere was lodged at Queen's College, Smith held conferences in his London home at Cannon Row, where, according to Strype, several "grave and apt men" met, "where was laid in a sufficient quantity of wood, coals and drink for their use" and where they considered possible changes to the *Book of Common Prayer*, among other matters (57).<sup>5</sup>

After March 1559, there are no more records showing that de Vere was still at Cambridge. Lacking evidence to the contrary, we must assume that he returned to the household of Sir Thomas Smith. Smith himself was back in Essex by May when he was enlisted by the Queen

to administer an oath of loyalty to the citizens of Walden. In June he was called to serve by the sixteenth Earl of Oxford on a commission to instill the general use of the *Book of Common Prayer* and call out and examine the muster rolls (Strype 57). In any case, whether Smith was at home in Essex or on government business in London, de Vere's immediate studies would probably have been overseen by his personal tutor, Thomas Fowle.<sup>6</sup>

Dewar suggests what life would have been like with Sir Thomas Smith on his estates at Saffron Walden:

The manor which his new wife had brought with her . . . consisted of over a thousand acres of arable land, five hundred acres of meadows and pasture, and four hundred of woods and heath. There were two large mansion houses dating from the time when the property had consisted of two separate manors, one called Hill Hall and one called Mounthall. . . . (78)

Although some of the horrific burnings of "heretics" that took place in Mary's reign occurred not far from Hill Hall, Smith's diaries of 1555 through 1557 record little besides "thunderstorms, strange astrological events and menacing "signs":

Once more a nervous passion for astrology swept over him, leaving him sleepless, absorbed and a prey to depression.<sup>7</sup> [Yet] later he was to describe his life at this period as being that of the complete country gentleman, 'having been now these many years at home, passing my time now and then with hawking and hunting and now and then with looking on a book'" (78).

Smith lived in, and rebuilt, both houses after his marriage to Philippa and the building entries in his later diary refer sometimes to one house, sometimes to the other, although he loosely describes them both as "Montis Aulam."

His bailiff . . . and his wife's servant . . . testified in court in 1575 that they first lived with Sir Thomas and Lady Philippa after their marriage in 1554 at Hill Hall, which was then the larger house. They lived there with a large household of over twenty servants whilst the smaller farm house, Mounthall, was let. . . . Sir Thomas lived in the old Hill Hall until Thomas Luther departed out of Mounthall; in 1557 and 1558, Smith, as he records in his diary, rebuilt Mounthall and during the 1560s and 1570s Sir Thomas and Lady Philippa went to live there. . . . (194)

Presumably de Vere and his personal tutor (and perhaps a personal servant or two) would have shared rooms in one or both of these houses.

Saffron Walden was made famous in literary history by Thomas Nashe, who publicized it as the home of his opponent, Gabriel Harvey, in their pamphlet war in the early 1590s. Harvey, the oldest of three sons of the ropemaker, John Harvey, became Smith's protégé in the early '70s and was sponsored by him at the university (189). If Oxford lived with Smith

for eight years in the small community at Saffron Walden, it seems unlikely that he and Harvey would not have met as boys. Both roughly the same age, both eager students of language and the classics, both poets with strong opinions on what route English poetry should take, at the very least they would have known of each other through their connection with Smith.<sup>8</sup>

### The Death of Earl John

With Elizabeth's accession in 1558 the Protestant refugees came flooding back from Geneva and Frankfurt. Like them and others like himself who had waited out the reign in retirement, Smith was eager for preferment. Indeed, he must have expected it, as the majority of the new councillors were his old circle from Cambridge and former colleagues under King Edward. Cecil was already the Queen's Principal Secretary and her most influential councillor. Yet apart from appointments to a couple of commissions at the beginning of the reign, Smith was ignored.

At some point in 1559 he had a falling out with Cecil that lasted for two years (81-2). In his discussion of Smith's diary (1859), John Gouge Nichols states: "Under the year 1562, Sir Thomas Smith mentions some bickerings that occurred between himself and a party designated by the letters Sc., and which were unwillingly reconciled. There can be little doubt that this means the Secretary Cecil. . . ." (110). According to all three Smith scholars: Strype, Nichols and Dewar, neither Smith nor Cecil left any hints as to its cause.

Nevertheless, that Smith was appointed Ambassador to France as soon as the death of Earl John allowed Cecil to bring the twelve-year-old de Vere to live with him in London suggests that Smith's duties as de Vere's tutor were connected with the delay in his appointment to government office. If not, the coincidence in timing is remarkable.

Thus ended, abruptly, de Vere's childhood years with Sir Thomas Smith.

THE embassy did not go well, and by 1564 Smith was desperate to come home. He was finally recalled in April 1566. Again he remained marooned in Essex, this time for five years, and—except for an occasional brief mission—essentially unemployed. It seems the Queen regarded his French embassy as a failure. Finally in March 1571 he was reinstated on the Privy Council with the promise that he would soon be made Principal Secretary while Cecil would move on to the post of Lord Treasurer.

But first Cecil required that Smith help with the current inquiry into the secret plans of the Duke of Norfolk to marry Mary Queen of Scots. Smith assisted with the relentless questioning of Mary's agents. Despite their bitter protest, at Elizabeth's insistence Smith and his colleague were forced to resort to torture (127). Smith was involved in uncovering the



incriminating letter at Norfolk's residence, informing the unhappy nobleman of his arrest, and accompanying him on his final ride to the Tower (126).

In considering his diligence in this matter, it might be well to consider Dewar's comments on an entry in Smith's diary made during his long wait for office: "In these years Smith seems to have taken stock of his life and come to [the conclusion] that if he managed to return to public life he must hang on to office with all the discretion, caution and care that he could muster. . . ." (122)

In any case, the successful accomplishment of the entrapment and execution of Norfolk led to another appointment as Ambassador to France. Cecil was pleased and for once the Queen was pleased.

### Principal Secretary

Smith's success in concluding the Treaty of Blois in April 1572 ensured him the office of Principal Secretary as soon as he arrived back in England on July 13. It was now that Cecil, newly ennobled as Baron Burghley, moved up to the post of Lord Treasurer, while Smith took Burghley's place as Principal Secretary. Even so, all the important decisions made by the office of Secretary remained in Burghley's hands and Smith was content to let it be so (171). He was over sixty by now, increasingly worried by his health and grieving over the loss of his son, murdered in October, 1572, while in Ireland working to establish the colony his father had envisioned with such eagerness years before. In December 1573, Walsingham was appointed Second Secretary, and for three years they did the job as a team.<sup>9</sup>

In March of 1576, Smith became seriously ill and retired to his brother's house in Cannon Row with a cancerous growth in his throat that made it difficult for him to speak. Despite his illness, he drove himself, examining and rewriting as many of his old works as he could find. Later Strype would mourn: "Philosophical, astronomical, moral, political and divine thoughts, utterly lost." Dewar said he looked at the way in which the study of the civil law was being conducted and "indulged in an old man's grumble that nowadays young students of the civil law expected to become doctors of law overnight and had little of the exacting training which had been expected in his day" (188).

Smith died August 1577. He left all his Latin and Greek books, over 300 titles, to his *alma mater*, Queens' College, because, as he said, "I see that none of these which shall succeed me of long time are learned." Queens' accepted the books but, according to Dewar, "all trace of the bequest is now lost" (203).

### Smith’s library

Sometime in the early seventeenth century (according to the present librarian), Queens’ College drew up a “Donor List” of books donated by alumni over the years.<sup>10</sup> At that time they still possessed at least sixty-two of Smith’s original bequest.

In his 1698 biography of Smith, John Strype published as an Appendix a list compiled early on by Smith himself which consisted of 411 titles in Greek, Latin, French, Italian and Hebrew, some in multiple volumes (Franklin 274-281). Since it was drawn up in 1566, only four years after de Vere’s departure, we can feel fairly certain that the bulk of the titles on this early list would have been available to de Vere.<sup>11</sup> Not all the titles are found on both lists; certainly Smith would have continued to acquire books after 1566. Strype claims that he had 1000 books by the time of his death (Franklin 165).

### Smith’s nature

What sort of man was it who acted as tutor to Edward de Vere during his most impressionable years? His biographer may give us the best assessment:

Throughout his life Smith maintained interests far outside the range of the classical and legal scholar and statesman. His interest in mathematics and passion for scientific studies never left him. . . . He studied throughout his life astronomy, architecture, natural phenomena, drugs and medicines. His own chemical experiments with his precious “still” were an abiding interest. . . . An official dispatch to Lord Burghley on state affairs in the 1570s was accompanied by a bottle of one of his own concoctions “against my Lady of Oxford’s miscarriage.” The catalogue of his library covered over three hundred and fifty books on all subjects, especially mathematics, architecture, theology, poetry and astronomy. He read widely in the poets and had a tendency to break into lamentable verse himself. There are books in Hebrew, French and Italian as well as Latin and Greek. His own books and treatises were to cover an endless variety of subjects. He had a truly inquiring mind and was interested in everything. (14)

He never lacked ideas or ambition. Imaginative, passionate, and original, had all his plans borne fruit he would have left a brilliant and impressive legacy behind him. He campaigned for a new pronunciation of Greek and tried to revolutionize the writing and spelling of the English language. He endeavored to reorganize the structure of legal education in England and the organization of the courts. . . . In his written plans and attempts to colonize and settle Ireland he anticipated all that was new, fruitful and effective in the colonization of the New World. Ranging over all the political and economic problems of the day, his ideas were often far-reaching, brilliant and pen-

etrating. . . .

In the last year of his life he fought back illness and death with a feverish attempt to revise several of the books “written in my youth and since lost.” These had always been a secondary consideration in his life; most of them had been written solely to forward his political career. His belated attention to them was more deserved than he knew. They cover a surprising variety of subjects and some of them have had a high and lasting reputation.

His most important book is the *De Republica Anglorum* or a *Discourse on the Commonwealth of England* written during a wearying embassy in France in 1565. Here he made the only contemporary survey we have of Elizabethan government and institutions. It has become a constitutional classic. . . . His book and broadsheet on the colonization of Ireland, written in the 1570s, have been described as the first piece of sustained argument for colonization to be published in England and indeed “the first direct printed publicity for any business venture.”

The *Dialogue on the Queen’s Marriage* written in 1561 was one of the most widely copied tracts in Elizabethan England, read and reread as men culled arguments from it in the wearying debate on Elizabeth’s duty to marry and the problems involved in her choice. His early books on Greek pronunciation and English orthography were much admired products of his academic studies. . . . As well as these acknowledged works of his, this study of Smith lays his claim to an even more impressive literary achievement. If he and not John Hales was responsible for the most celebrated tract in Tudor social history, the *Discourse of the Commonweal of England* and if the complex and brilliant *Memorandum for the Understanding of the Exchange* was also from his pen and not that of Sir Thomas Gresham, Smith will appear as significant a figure for our understanding of the social and economic structure of sixteenth-century England as for our knowledge of its political and judicial organization.<sup>12</sup>

Books, tracts and treatises were only one side of Smith’s literary output. He was one of the great letter writers of his day. Nearly seven hundred of his letters still survive, many of them running to several pages.

From all this new material a very different figure from Strype’s characterization emerges. The grave, solid, sober, moderate man was a fiction. Smith was mercurial in temperament, rash and impetuous, incredibly insensitive to other people. Despite his impressive learning and brilliance he had little political judgment and had no feeling for the right action at the right time. He lacked vitality and stability and he was subject to nervous . . . prostration whenever he was worried or anxious. The energy and endurance necessary to sustain the brilliant Cambridge scholar through a successful public career were not his to command.

Touching life at many points, a man of affairs with a brilliant and facile pen, full of original ideas and ambitious plans, . . . conceited and arrogant, Smith could perhaps have been a typical Elizabethan but for two things. He lacked the virile touch of Elizabethan self confidence and he thoroughly disliked the Queen. He looked at the throne and was neither dazzled by Gloriana nor bewitched by Eliza. He never even saw the point of behaving as if he were. He had little use for women and none whatsoever for a Queen. This is one Tudor biography without Elizabeth the Great. (3-7)

"Brought up" in Smith's household, what effect did this great teacher have on the boy in his care? We suggest that it would hardly be possible to come up with an influence more perfectly constituted to mold a writer like "Shakespeare."

### The Shakespeare-Smith connection

Let's compare Smith's qualities with what we know about Shakespeare. Smith was acknowledged by his contemporaries to be the greatest legal mind of his day; lawyers have written at length about Shakespeare's flawless knowledge of the law. Smith was a master of oratory and rhetoric; a number of scholars have written about Shakespeare's mastery of rhetorical techniques, most obviously his constant use of metaphor. Smith was owner of a personal library of over 400 books that covered every possible topic; Shakespeare continually demonstrated a broad and eclectic fund of knowledge derived from specific books identified by three centuries of scholarship. Smith was fluent in Greek, Latin, French, Italian and Hebrew; Shakespeare clearly showed his knowledge of these first four languages; scholars have also claimed he showed knowledge of Hebrew.<sup>13</sup> Smith was deeply versed in Roman history; Shakespeare shows his extensive knowledge of Roman history in *Julius Caesar*, *Coriolanus*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* (Thomas 220-3). Smith was "a great Platonist"; scholars have written at length on Shakespeare's debt to Plato.

Smith wrote the first treatise on English colonization, promoting the English colonization of Ireland, the first English document promoting the colonization of "undeveloped" lands; Shakespeare addressed the same issues (from a very different perspective) in *The Tempest*. Smith was a writer who often used dialogue as a device in his treatises, as in his treatise *On the Queen's Marriage*, written in the form of a conversation among four friends;<sup>14</sup> dialogue is, of course, the primary medium of Shakespeare's plays.

Smith was considered a master of "style and grace of language"; the name "Shakespeare" should be enough. Smith was "a brilliant and facile" writer; again, "Shakespeare" is enough. Smith was a "voluminous" writer; as it stands at present, the canon of thirty-eight plays is actually rather slim for a lifetime of work,<sup>15</sup> but almost as many more plays and poems may

well be added to it once it is possible to attribute to him the pre-Shakespearean works claimed for him by scholars of those works. Smith was one who wrote anonymously, who wrote to make things happen, not for fame; as did "Shakespeare," if, as we think likely, he hid his true identity behind pen names and stand-ins. Smith was one who often wrote to relieve anxiety; Shakespeare frequently portrays his characters in states of anxiety; they often refer to having difficulty with sleeping. Smith wrote poetry to relieve his anxieties; of Shakespeare's tendency to write poetry nothing need be said; the Sonnets above all reflect his need to write to "unpack" his heart. Smith was "subject to nervous prostration [and] melancholy"; like Hamlet, Lear and Macbeth. Smith was "mercurial, rash, and impetuous"; as were Hotspur, Hal, Falconbridge, and Mercutio.

Smith was a committed Protestant, as his friendships, his royal commissions and his library testify, but his loyalties crossed religious lines and at his deepest level he was closer to the secular philosophy of the ancients that he so admired; many scholars have argued over Shakespeare's own religious beliefs, but his very ability to give voice to many points of view suggests that his deepest personal response to life was that of Stoic acceptance. Smith was involved in the updating of that backbone of Anglican ritual, the *Book of Common Prayer* and was commissioned by the Queen in 1558-9 to see to its acceptance by the churches in Essex; Shakespeare demonstrates a thorough knowledge of this book (Shaheen 51).

Smith was one who greatly enjoyed hunting and hawking; imagery from hunting and most particularly of hawking fill the works of Shakespeare. Smith was a dedicated gardener with a love of roses (Dewar 133); Shakespeare seems to know as much about plants and horticulture as a professional gardener;<sup>16</sup> his love of roses is revealed in almost everything he wrote. Smith's fascination with making his own medicines by means of distilling the juices of plants, what today we call *pharmacology*, is well-documented; images derived from the process of distilling are almost as prevalent in Shakespeare's works as those from gardening. Smith was interested in all medical techniques; several books have been written about the fact that Shakespeare's writing seems to reflect the highest levels of medical knowledge of his time. Smith had a professional's knowledge of astronomy and astrology; Shakespeare's knowledge of these was equally profound.

At the forefront of these particulars are five areas that most will agree are beyond all others in the continual use to which Shakespeare put them as metaphors. These are the law, medicine (distilling, pharmacology) and gardening (horticulture), hawking and astrology (astronomy). These are the very subjects with which Smith himself was most deeply concerned, a concern reflected in his letters, in the comments on him and his life by his friends and contemporaries, and by the titles in his library.

### Shakespeare's reading and Smith's library

A close comparison of the titles scholars have urged as sources for Shakespeare with the titles in Sir Thomas Smith's library would require more space than is available here. For now, suffice it to say that his library contained the following works fundamental to the history plays: Halle's Chronicles, Livy, Suetonius, Tacitus, Polydore Virgil, Plutarch in Latin, and Saxo Grammaticus (also histories of France, Brittany and Aquitaine, Florence and Venice in French and Italian). Other Shakespeare sources include: Plato in Greek and Latin, Pliny in Latin, Homer in Greek, Pindar in Greek, Aristophanes in Latin, Sophocles in Greek and Latin, Plautus in Latin, Petrarch in Latin, Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio and Aretino in Italian and Joachim du Bellay in French. There were dictionaries and grammars in French, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, twenty texts on medical matters, fifty-four legal texts, and fifty-seven works of theology (Strype 274-81).

Between the books available to him while with Sir Thomas Smith and the library of 2000 or so books available to him while he was at Cecil House (see page 7), Oxford certainly had more than enough opportunity to do the reading that numerous scholars have traced in the works of Shakespeare.

### Did Shakespeare put Oxford's tutor on the stage?

Scholars who have discussed the subject generally agree that the character of Polonius was based to some extent on Lord Burghley (Ogburn 666), who took over Oxford's training where Smith left off when Oxford was twelve. Thus it seems reasonable to ask whether there might be evidence that Smith was also depicted in the works of Shakespeare.

There is an anonymous play in the Edgerton collection (thought to have been originally part of the Alleyn collection at Dulwich College), that contains characters and scenes so strongly reminiscent of Smith, of young de Vere, and of events experienced during the time de Vere lived with Smith, that a close examination might be rewarding.

"*Thomas of Woodstock*, called *Richard II* in the Malone Society diplomatic transcript and without title in the source, is," according to its editor, E.B. Everitt, a "superlative comedy," and although he cannot *prove* that it is one of Shakespeare's early plays, he makes it clear that he feels certain that it is. Everitt suggests that this play originally preceded *Richard II* in a series devoted to royal history that led from *Edward II* up through the Tudors to finish with *Henry VIII*. He believes that it may have been preceded by an even earlier Richard play that included the peasant's revolt and the desertion of the Duchess of Ireland by her husband. The peasants revolt was lifted (he feels) for inclusion in *Henry VI Part 2*, and without this scene,

“the rest of the play was considered not worth saving.” (252) It should be of interest that the scene that got left on the cutting room floor was one in which the Duchess of Ireland complains of being deserted by her unkind husband, whose name, though she doesn’t mention it in the play, was Robert de Vere, ninth Earl of Oxford.<sup>17</sup>

The historical Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, uncle of Richard II, was, according to historian Desmond Seward, author of *The Hundred Years War* (1978) “as ambitious as he was violent-tempered and would later intrigue murderously against his nephew’s government” (127-8)—rather a different characterization than that of the honest and peaceable old curmudgeon of the anonymous play.

Here the uncles rush onstage at the beginning of the first act, afraid that Richard has poisoned them. Woodstock is not yet onstage.

Lancaster: A heavy charge, good Woodstock, hast thou had,  
To be protector to so wild a prince,  
So far degenerate from his noble father . . .

York: Patience, good Lancaster. Tell me, Kind Cheney,  
How does thy master, our good brother Woodstock,  
*Plain Thomas*, for by’t’h’Rood, so all men call him  
For his *plain dealing and his simple clothing*.  
Let others jet in silk and gold, says he,  
A coat of English frieze best pleaseth me.  
How thinks his *unsophisticated plainness*  
Of these *bitter compounds*? *Fears he no drug*  
*Put in his broth*? *Shall his health be secure*?

Cheney: Faith, mylord, his mind suits with his habit,  
*Homely and plain, both free from pride and envy*,  
And therein will admit distrust to none.

The Duke (Woodstock) enters and they discuss the need to warn the King about his flattering friends.

Woodstock: Destroy those flatterers, and tell King Richard  
He does abase himself to countenance them.  
Soft! Soft!  
*Fruit that grows high is not securely plucked.*  
*We must use ladders and by steps ascend*  
Till by degrees we reach the altitude.

In the next act, the lords assemble in their best finery to welcome Richard’s bride, Anne of Bohemia. Lancaster greets her with typically Shakespearean ceremony, to which Woodstock, impatient of such “feminine toys,” responds:

Let me prevent the rest, for mercy's sake.  
 If all their welcomes be as long as thine  
 This health will not go round this week, by'th'Mass.

When the King compliments him on his clothes, donned against his will for the wedding, then comments on how slowly his horse rides, Woodstock replies:

And can ye blame the beast? Afore my god,  
 He was not wont to bear such loads. Indeed  
*A hundred oaks upon these shoulders hang*  
 To make me brave upon your wedding day . . .

The expression was a common one expressing the expense of Courtly dress as its cost in terms of estate property. Later he rages at Richard's sycophants:

*Shall cankers eat the fruit*  
*That planting and good husbandry hath nourished?*

(257-8; emphasis added)

After the uncles have resigned and the Duke has returned to his country estate on the Thames, he is visited by a courtier similar to Osric in Hamlet. Woodstock is alone in the courtyard, and, due to his plain attire, the courtier mistakes him for a groom and gives him instructions on how to care for his horse. Woodstock plays along and even when the courtier realizes that he is the Duke, still insists on getting his tip. At the end, the wicked young King and his gang dress up like travelling players come to entertain Woodstock and, as soon as he's relaxed and has sent away his servants, they kidnap him and transport him to Calais where they take a very long time about murdering him in grand Shakespearean style.

Where did the playwright get this altogether different character to replace the Machiavellian prince described by Seward? Hear what Dewar has to say of another Thomas:

Smith was insecure about his social skills. He asked that someone else be sent to France to assist him with his ambassadorial tasks, someone not so "rude and homely." This picture of himself as the plain blunt man, unused to Court compliments, smooth words and refined manners is one that Smith was always drawing. (90)

He was perhaps less haughty than simply boorish and ill-mannered. He never managed to acquire any social graces and was if anything rather proud of his lack of a courtier's social equipment. He frequently referred to his utter lack of appreciation of music, his dislike of Court pastimes and manners, his impatience with "frivolities," especially feminine ones. He admitted later in life that he had always been "rude" and "rough" in manner, adding complacently that "my fault is plainness and that I cannot dissemble enmity or pleasure." (57)



While acting as secretary to Somerset, the Duchess of Somerset took Smith to task for his “haughty” attitude, his wife’s plain and “uncourtlike” clothes and her failure to maintain the standards of hospitality which were expected of someone in his position. A letter to the Duchess survives in which Smith defends his wife, although admitting that she “did not go so gorgeously as some would have her.” (35)

### A Conjecture

Struggling to bring the story of the young King Richard to life, I suggest that this young playwright did as he would do so often in his later plays, he combined persons and events from his own life with history from the chronicles. Like the King Richard of the play, Oxford was young, wild, with more money in his pocket (or credit, at least) than good sense, surrounded by admiring sycophants and free to indulge in the kind of fashionable clothing and behavior that he knew his old tutor disliked. The historical Woodstock, too distant in time and too sketchily portrayed in the books to distinguish from the King’s other uncles, was metamorphosed into someone the playwright knew very well, his old tutor, and himself into the brilliant but irresponsible young King, an identification with Richard that he would carry into all subsequent plays about him.

No doubt the historical Duke would have been hard put to recognize himself in this Elizabethan stage portrait. This Duke’s impatience with ceremony, his fondness for gardening metaphors, were imported from an altogether different spirit, one that disliked conspicuous consumption because he’d been raised in poverty and who was plain in his dress and abrupt in his manner—not for any reasons of philosophy—but because he’d been born into a family of sheep farmers and felt awkward in fancy clothes and formal social situations.

Are we seeing history altered to fit de Vere’s own story? Instead of seeking to *destroy* his nephew as did the historical Woodstock, the playwright has the Duke *defending* him. Disregarding (or possibly still ignorant of) the historical fact that Gloucester raised an army to defeat his nephew, we see him portrayed as a peaceable man, more than willing to retire from a complicated and wicked Court to the homely duties of his country estate, even as Smith retreated to his Essex home after the fall of Somerset. Woodstock’s brothers tease him about his plain dress and his concern over his diet while he fulminates against the wastefulness and frivolity of Richard’s Court, even as Smith was wont to describe his diet in detail in letters home from France (133) and to complain about the time and money wasted by the French in frivolous and expensive merry-making (110). In place of military metaphors, this general expresses himself in terms of herbal remedies and climbing ladders into apple trees.

Finally, in a scene with little relevance either to history or to Shakespeare’s sources,

Woodstock is attacked in his home by the young King and his gang of toughs even as Smith's home was attacked in 1559 by the servants of Lord Windsor:

The Windsors claimed that Ankerwicke was theirs. In November [1559] . . . they led a company of twenty men into Ankerwicke in the early morning and with swords and daggers drawn evicted Smith's terrified household, took the keys, and after maliciously damaging some of the furniture left three men in possession. Smith, having been warned, approached the house in the evening with a band of his servants, stiffened by the presence of the constable of Wyrardsbury. They were attacked in the dark by more of the Windsor men with swords and bows and arrows. Outraged, Smith appealed to the Star Chamber to restrain the Windsors.<sup>18</sup> (83)

The quality that causes Everitt to call *Thomas of Woodstock* a "superlative play" is, above all, the sense that real people are speaking. This playwright has that quality that Harold Bloom notes about Shakespeare, the ability to make even the most minor characters real. The exchanges between Richard and his uncle in the first act of *Thomas of Woodstock* sparkle with the energy of real people, real exchanges, jests, feelings, and attitudes.

It is pleasant to consider that they may be based on a real relationship, that of Oxford and his old tutor. They would have had plenty of opportunity to meet during the years when Smith was Principal Secretary and Oxford was in the first flush of his years of popularity at Court. The play shows Woodstock dismayed at Richard's extravagant style of dress. Can we doubt that similar conversations occurred between Smith, the advocate of plain living, and his former charge, already known for his extravagance?

Correspondences such as these between Oxford's life and the plots and characters of plays may not be proof of his authorship, but they are certainly evidence.

### **Smith's relationship with de Vere**

Although Smith must have felt affection for the young man that had once been a small boy in his care we have no direct evidence of it as yet. There is the phrase from the letter previously quoted by Strype, ". . . and Sir Thomas was glad to be thus employed, to contribute to the generous education of all noble youth, for the good of the commonwealth as well as of the Earl that once had been his pupil" (26). In 1574, when Oxford was in trouble after running off to the Continent without permission, at the end of a letter to Walsingham, pleading for his intercession with the Queen on Oxford's behalf, Burghley writes: "I doubt not but Master Secretary Smith will remember his old love towards the Earl when he was his scholar" (Ward 96). The Elizabethans used the word "love" far more broadly than we do today, but

at the very least we can be fairly sure that there was no ill feeling.

In his letter of April 1576 to Burghley (end note 3, page 41) in which Smith deplores Oxford's treatment of Anne, he seems to stumble over the phrase "saying it grieveth me (ever) [crossed out] for the (only) [added in margin] love I bear him, because he was brought up in my house." With "ever" struck out and "only" inserted in the only available space, in the margin, it seems that for some reason he thought better of his original wording: "it grieveth me ever for the love I bear him," substituting the awkward "it grieveth me for the only love I bear him." Did he intend to change it to "if only for the love I bear him, because he was brought up in my house"?—modifying the sentiment so that it would seem that he attributed his love for Oxford purely to the fact that he was brought up in his house? The last thought in a letter is often the most revealing.

One can't help but wonder whether there wasn't some jealousy on Cecil's part with regard to the natural feelings that Oxford must have had for the man that had charge of him for eight years from the time he was hardly more than a baby, feelings that he would never have for Cecil, or anyone else, for that matter, and, knowing this and needing to preserve Cecil's good will, Smith was hesitant to show his feelings for Oxford here or in any letter to Burghley.

There is another cloudy remark in Smith's letter to Lady Burghley that accompanied the medicine he sent for Anne during her pregnancy in 1575. After a complicated explanation of how the medicine he has prepared will work, he ends by saying

If her Ladyship do not find immediate comfort in it, then nature is too feeble. I can say no more, but I would be sorry that my Lady of Oxford should miscarry as if she were two times my own daughter, for diverse causes; and would be as glad to do her good as any living, next to your Ladyship . . . .<sup>19</sup> (Dewar 175)

What did he mean by "two times my own daughter" if not that he would be sorry: first, as she was his friend's daughter, and second, that she was as close to a daughter as he would ever know, since she was the wife of a man whose childhood was spent under his roof. And although most of those "divers causes" would involve the many years of friendship with the Cecils—a friendship as necessary to Smith for his success and economic well-being as for any pleasure it gave—one of those causes might have been a measure of sympathy for the naughty husband, off to Padua, where Smith had no doubt sown a few wild oats in his own youth, away from the griefs brought upon men by females, those willful haggard hawks. Angry as he knew Lady Burghley must be at her son-in-law, Smith could never resist letting anyone know what his personal feelings were on a given subject, however obliquely.

**"Hence will I to my ghostly father's cell . . ."**

But there is yet another play that more surely immortalizes the relationship between de Vere and his tutor. Here is the scene in *Romeo and Juliet* in which we meet Friar Lawrence for the first time:

Act II, Scene 3: Friar Lawrence's Cell:

Enter Friar Lawrence with a basket.

Fri. L.:       The gray-ey'd morn smiles on the frowning night  
                   Chequering the eastern clouds with streaks of light;  
                   And fleckéd darkness like a drunkard reels  
                   From forth day's path and Titan's fiery wheels.  
                   Now, 'ere the sun advance his burning eye,  
                   The day to cheer and night's dank dew to dry,  
                   I must up-fill this osier cage of ours  
                   With baleful weeds and precious-juicéd flowers.  
                   The earth, that's nature's mother, is her tomb;  
                   What is her burying grave, that is her womb;  
                   And from her womb children of divers kind  
                   We sucking on her natural bosom find;  
                   Many for many virtues excellent,  
                   None but for some, and yet all different.  
                   O, mickle is the powerful grace that lies  
                   In herbs, plants, stones and their true qualities:  
                   For naught so vile that on the earth doth live  
                   But to the earth some special good doth give;  
                   Nor aught so good but, strain'd from that fair use,  
                   Revolts from the true birth, stumbling on abuse;  
                   Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied;  
                   And vice sometimes by action dignified.  
                   Within the infant rind of this small flower  
                   Poison hath residence, and medicine power;  
                   For this, being smelt, with that part cheers each part;  
                   Being tasted, slays all senses with the heart.  
                   To such opposéd kings encamp them still  
                   In man as well as herbs—grace and rude will;  
                   And where the worser is predominant,  
                   Full soon the canker death eats up that plant.

We suggest that Friar Lawrence is a blend of de Vere's tutors, to whom he has given the name of one, Laurence Nowell, his tutor during his years with Burghley, and the personality and spirit of the other, Sir Thomas Smith. The author has used his playwright's magical powers to bring his old tutor onstage to speak of his great knowledge of stars and plants, the wisdom and philosophy he derived from years of study, wisdom Shakespeare distilled into thirty potent lines, even as Smith distilled the virtues of his plants into medicines. In the final lines of this opening speech, Friar Lawrence speaks of death in gardening terms, as a "canker," as cancer was the cause of Smith's death.

Romeo's Friar, though a cleric and a man who loves his garden, is no recluse, hidden away from the trials of life; like Smith, he is a man of the world, a man of action. When there is trouble he comes up with a plan that involves sensitive knowledge of the use of plants, the kind of knowledge that Smith was constantly seeking and for which he was renowned. Friar Lawrence has solutions at his finger-tips, friends he can turn to in far away places. To the frightened young people he is a rock of support, a man willing to shoulder great human responsibilities. Also like Smith, he is a man who believes that marriage can heal the breach between two families "at jar."<sup>19</sup> Above all, he is a father, a "ghostly father," as Romeo calls him—"ghostly" meaning "spiritual"—to the desperate youth. Hear him as he does his best to argue Romeo out of killing himself:

Hold thy desperate hand!  
 Art thou a man? Thy form cries out thou art:  
 Thy tears are womanish; thy wild acts denote  
 The unreasonable fury of a beast:  
 Unseemly woman in a seeming man!  
 Thou has amaz'd me: by my holy order,  
 I thought thy disposition better temper'd.  
 Hast thou slain Tybalt? Wilt thou slay thyself?  
 And slay thy lady, too, that lives in thee,  
 By doing damnéd hate upon thyself?  
 Why rail'st thou on thy birth, the heaven and earth?  
 Since birth, and heaven and earth, all three do meet  
 In thee at once; which thou at once would'st lose.  
 Fie, fie! Thou sham'st thy shape, thy love, thy wit;  
 Which, like a usurer, abound'st in all,  
 And usest none in that true use indeed,  
 Which should bedeck thy shape, thy love, thy wit.  
 Thy noble shape is but a form of wax,

Digressing from the valour of a man;  
 Thy dear love sworn, but hollow perjury,  
 Killing that love which thou hast vow'd to cherish;  
 Thy wit, that ornament to shape and love,  
 Mis-shapen in the conduct of them both,  
 Like powder in a skillless soldier's flask,  
 Is set a-fire by thine own ignorance,  
 And thou dismember'd with thine own defence.  
 What, rouse thee, man! Thy Juliet is alive,  
 For whose dear sake thou wast but lately dead;  
 There art thou happy: Tybalt would kill thee,  
 But thou slew'st Tybalt; there art thou happy too:  
 The law that threaten'd death, becomes thy friend,  
 And turns it to exile; there art thou happy:  
 A pack of blessing lights upon thy back;  
 Happiness courts thee in her best array;  
 But like a misbehav'd and sullen wench,  
 Thou pout'st upon thy fortune and thy love:  
 Take heed, take heed, for such die miserable.  
 Go, get thee to thy love, as was decreed,  
 Ascend her chamber, hence and comfort her;  
 But look thou stay not till the watch be set,  
 For then thou canst not pass to Mantua;  
 Where thou shalt live till we can find a time  
 To blaze your marriage, reconcile your friends,  
 Beg pardon of the prince and call thee back . . .  
 Go before, nurse: commend me to thy lady;  
 And bid her hasten all the house to bed,  
 Which heavy sorrow makes them apt unto:  
 Romeo is coming.

Nurse: O Lord, I could have stay'd here all the night  
 To hear good counsel: O, what learning is!

O, what indeed! \_\_\_\_\_ 

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare's detailed knowledge of Italian cities, their topography, rivers, ports, and customs are such that only someone who had been there could have known. He also knew a great deal about France, particularly the courts of Henri III and Henri de Navarre. But these, along with his knowledge of music and the sea came to him from other sources, and so are not considered in this article.

<sup>2</sup> Thirty years later, William Strachey's grandson would carry through on Smith's dream of colonizing, only it would be in Virginia, not Ireland. His depiction of the shipwreck of the "Sea Venture" and the events following it on the Island of Bermuda has led some orthodox Shakespeare scholars to cling to the opinion that it was on Strachey's description that Shakespeare based much of *The Tempest*.

<sup>3</sup> The source given by Dewar for this statement is a letter in the British Library from Smith to Burghley, written during the final period of Smith's life when he was battling cancer at his home in Essex. The pertinent paragraph comes at the end of a page and a half on other topics:

I am sorry to hear of this undutiful and unkind dealing of my Lord of Oxford towards your Lordship which I am sure must very much grieve your honour. Saying it grieveth me (ever) [struck out] for the (only) [added in margin] love I bear him, because he was brought up in my house. Your Lordship's benefits toward him and great cares for himself I cannot tell [?] I am sorry for it. And sorry to hear so much of it. *Sed hae sunt Procellae domesticae sola prudentia sustinendae, quas tempus et consilium tendem, uti spero mitigabunt [?] et cum imp bora illorum consultatorum davo et dedec tu ut aequi est.* [But these are domestic storms to be withstood by prudence alone which time and advice will eventually, as I hope, diminish (?) and with (?).

And so I commit your Lordship to allmighty God.  
From Cannon Row the 25th of April 1576. . . .

T. Smith (BM Harleian MA. 6992/21)

Unhappily for Oxfordian researchers, although the phrase "brought up in my house" is fairly sweeping (it is unlikely he would use it had de Vere been with him only briefly) it does not substantiate Dewar's specific statement that de Vere came to Smith in December of 1554. That she is as specific as she is suggests that somewhere in her research she was given a reason for that date, although unfortunately the citation she quotes does not substantiate it. For now it must suffice.

Obviously Smith is referring to the scandal caused by Oxford's refusal to see or speak with his wife or her family upon his return from the Continent. His phrasing suggests that he regards the matter as a domestic problem that should have been dealt with within the confines of the home. If so, he would have been seconding Oxford, who was doubly angry with Burghley for making their private trouble, as he said, "the fable of the world." (Ogburn 559)

[The author is grateful to Eddi Jolly and Philip Johnson of Barton Peverill College, Southampton, UK, for their efforts to locate the pertinent paragraph above; and to their colleague, Dr. John McGavin of Southampton University, for translating both Smith's handwriting and his Latin; also to Daphne Pearson of Redbrook, Gloucestershire, for her efforts in translating Smith's handwriting.]

<sup>4</sup> Although the arrangements for de Vere to matriculate at Queens' were made in October while the Queen didn't die until November 17, it was common knowledge that she wasn't long for the world. Elizabeth's backers were making obvious preparations for her accession through the summer and into

the fall (Erickson 160-1). They had need to prepare in advance as their ranks were thinly spread. Many of their leaders were still in exile on the Continent and so would find it impossible to return quickly enough to form a government to replace Mary's.

<sup>5</sup> Of this period, Strype states:

Among the first businesses of state the Queen employed Smith about he was in a commission December 23, 1558, together with the Judges, Sergeants, Attorney and Solicitor General, and Mr. Goodrick, for consideration of all things necessary for the Parliament now near meeting.

He also states:

The first thing he [Smith] seemed to be employed in was, in preparing a reformed Office of Religion . . . [but first] . . . a book of Divine Service should be framed . . . . For which purpose seven men were nominated, Dr. Bill . . . Master of Trinity college in Cambridge and after, Dean of Westminster; Dr. Parker . . . soon after Archbishop of Canterbury; Dr. May, late Dean of St. Paul's and soon after, Elect of York; Dr. Cox, late Dean of Westminster and Christ Church, Oxon, after Bishop of Ely; Dr. Pilkington, late Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, and after, Bishop of Durham; Grindal, soon after Bishop of London; and Whitehead . . . these last four having been exiles in the last reign. And our Knight, Sir Thomas Smith, his office was to call them together and to be among them. (Franklin 56-7)

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Alan Nelson of the University of California at Berkeley has found evidence that one Thomas Fowle was employed as a tutor to de Vere throughout much of the period when he was with Smith. Fowle was a graduate and a fellow of St. John's, and after 1562, when de Vere went to live with Burghley, was made a canon at Norwich. Nelson portrays him as a man of strong anti-papist sentiment and unstable temperament (de Vere conference).

<sup>7</sup> According to Nichols's records, Smith first discovered "judicial astrology" (the casting of horoscopes for purposes of predicting the future) at age twenty and spent two years or so in intense study of the subject (103)—most likely through his reading of ancient Greek texts, the source of western astrology. However, according to his student, the cartographer, Richard Eden, he later condemned it. Yet throughout his life, whenever he was uncertain or in trouble, he returned to it (Dewar 65) in hopes, no doubt, of discerning what lay ahead.

That Smith was embarrassed about his use of astrology probably had little to do with the likelihood that others regarded it as a superstition—his intellectual arrogance would have protected him from what he would doubtless have considered their ignorance—but it did have to do with the apparent attempt to sidestep the will of God. It was this that caused many to condemn astrology in Smith's time and not, as today, because it was regarded as mere superstition.

<sup>8</sup> Harvey did refer to their acquaintance in his 1594 pamphlet *Four Letters*, in which, while defending himself against Nashe's accusation that he satirized Oxford in his poem, "Speculum Tuscanismi," Harvey stated that during his undergraduate days at Cambridge (in the early 1570s), Oxford had bestowed "Angels" (coins) on him and that they had been introduced by Thomas Smith, Sir Thomas's illegitimate son (Ward 158-9). If they did know each other early on, Harvey may have been hesitant to speak of it openly in print, social protocol requiring that acknowledgements of personal acquaintance must always come from the man of higher rank.

<sup>9</sup> Besides Burghley and Walsingham, Smith's closest friends were his old colleague from the days



of Edward VI, John Thynne, Sir James Croft, Sir Thomas Heneage and Sir Humphrey Gilbert.

<sup>10</sup> I am grateful to Martin Williams, Librarian at Queens' College, for his help in obtaining a copy of this document.

<sup>11</sup> The author intends to do a more intensive study of the titles in this list for a future article.

<sup>12</sup> It seems that Dewar's confidence that Smith was the author of these works has been accepted, at least in part. In her dissertation of 1979, Anne Clarke states: "Thanks to the work of Mary Dewar, Smith is now the acknowledged author of the *Discourse of the Commonweal of this Realm of England* and is considered a possible author of the *Memorandum for Understanding the Exchange*, long attributed to Sir Thomas Gresham" (39). Rosemary O'Day in her recent (1995) *The Tudor Age* affirms his authorship of the *Discourse* (109-10).

<sup>13</sup> In his 1999 article, "Shakespeare's Little Hebrew," Gary Goldstein makes a convincing case that the names of the four Jewish characters were derived from the Old Testament in Hebrew (70-77).

<sup>14</sup> "Spitewed" is against marriage altogether; "Lovealien" urges marriage with a foreign prince; while "Homefriend," urging that she marry an Englishman, wins the day. Dewar states that the manuscript was extremely popular: "There is scarcely a collection of Tudor manuscripts anywhere in England without a copy" (4).

<sup>15</sup> Lope de Vega (1562-1635), often called the "Shakespeare of Spain," claimed he wrote 2000 plays, of which at least 700 are extant.

<sup>16</sup> In an article in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* (Spring 2000), Dr. Daniel Wright goes into detail on the relationship between Richard II and Robert de Vere, ninth Earl of Oxford, its effect on English history and its astonishing absence from Shakespeare's version of events.

<sup>17</sup> As Carolyn Spurgeon points out, it is gardening that he knows—he shows little awareness of farming techniques (45-6).

<sup>18</sup> From Dewar's account it isn't clear whether the Smiths (or de Vere) were residing at Ankerwicke at the time, but even if they were not, the nine-year-old would certainly have heard about it from those who were there. His sense of violation by the Windsors would be reinforced five years later when he himself was attacked in court by their nephew, Edward, Lord Windsor, husband of his older half-sister, Katherine de Vere, in their effort to have him declared illegitimate in order to wrest his title and inheritance from him (Ward 8).

<sup>19</sup> Smith to Lady Burghley; B.M. Lansdowne 19/50.

<sup>20</sup> Smith was known for his opinion that the Queen had the power to bring peace through her marriage, an argument he presented more than once as the primary reason that she should marry.

## Works Cited

- Clarke, Ann B. *Thought, Word and Deed in the Mid Tudor Commonwealth: Sir Thomas Smith and Sir William Cecil in the Reign of Edward VI*. Master's thesis. PSU, 1979.
- Dewar, Mary. *Sir Thomas Smith: A Tudor Intellectual in Office*. London: Athlone, 1964.
- Erickson, Carolly. *The First Elizabeth*. New York: Summit, 1983.
- Everitt, E.B. and R.L. Armstrong. *Six Early Plays Related to the Shakespeare Canon*. *Anglistica*, XIV. Copenhagen: Rosenhilde & Bagger, 1965.
- Goldstein, Gary. "Shakespeare's Little Hebrew." *The Elizabethan Review*. 7.1. (1999): 70-77.
- Grillo, Ernesto. *Shakespeare and Italy*. New York: Haskell, 1973.
- Hume, Martin A.S. *The Great Lord Burghley; A Study in Elizabethan Statecraft*. (1898). New York: Haskell House, 1968.
- Hurstfield, Joel. *Lord Burghley as Master of the Court of Wards; 1561-1598*. TRHS, 1947.
- Joseph, Sister Miriam. *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language*. New York: Hafner, 1966.
- McFarlane, K.B. *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*. The Ford Lectures for 1953. Oxford: OUP, 1973.
- Nelson, Alan. "Oxford's Education." The Fourth Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference. Concordia University, Portland, Oregon. 7 April. 2000.
- Nichols, John Gough. "Some Additions to the Biographies of Sir John Cheke and Sir Thomas Smith." *Archaeologia*. London: The Society of Antiquaries, March, 1859.
- O'Day, Rosemary. *The Tudor Age*. London: Longmans, 1995.
- Ogburn, Charlton. *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: the Myth and the Reality*. New York: Dodd Mead, 1984.
- Read, Conyers. *Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth*. New York: Knopf, 1955.
- . *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth*. New York: Knopf, 1960.
- Shaheen, Naseeb. *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays* (1931). Cranbury, NJ: Assoc. UP, 1999.
- Strype, John. *The Life of the Learned Sir Thomas Smith Kt., Doctor of the Civil Law, Principal Secretary of State to King Edward the Sixth and Queen Elizabeth*. A. Roper and R. Bassett (1698). S6023.
- . *Ibid*. New York: Burt Franklin Reprints, 1974.
- Ward, Bernard M. *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, 1550-1604*. London: John Murray, 1928.
- Wright, Daniel L. "Vere-y Interesting: Shakespeare's Treatment of the Earls of Oxford in the History Plays." *The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*. 36.1 (2000): 1, 14-21.